



THE ASSOCIATION & VOICE OF THE US SEWN PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

SEAMS' Year In Review

Association, members stayed connected, prospered during unprecedented crisis

This year, 2020, saw everyone's worlds turned upside down, including SEAMS and our members. But that didn't inhibit the association, or you in particular, from prepping, pitching in and, in many cases, pivoting into something new and different.

As a result SEAMS and our membership – together – learned new things, met new people and partners and, in all likelihood, created a better position for long-term growth with an open mind and a new mindset heading into the new year. Undoubtedly, 2020 taught us the power of communication, cooperation and collaboration.

SEAMS' Year in Review is dominated by COVID-19 and the resulting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) issue, of course – and a plethora of positive outcomes resulting from efforts by the association and our members. Though you likely didn't see each other face to face much if at all this year as Texprocess Americas and SEAMS' Fall Networking Conference were cancelled due to the pandemic, that doesn't mean you didn't keep in touch with each other. Existing supply chains were utilized; new ones emerged; issues were addressed via phone calls, email or Zoom/Webex; and learning continued through webinars.

And SEAMS was there for you – and with you – every step of the way.

Let's take a quick look back to highlight some of these efforts, particularly from SEAMS' vantage point as you were stepping up to reassess and remain viable during a rapidly changing business environment.

When SARS-VoV-2 started to spread, many businesses were being ordered to close and the urgent call for PPE by healthcare heroes began to crescendo and get the attention it so desperately needed. And SEAMS and the sewn products/textile/apparel industry took notice. The majority of our cut-and-sew manufacturers and many of our textile providers were able to pivot production into PPE products, many doing so in a matter of days.

We at the SEAMS' office started getting calls from members and nonmembers alike with numerous questions around PPE, so the association quickly took on the role as an information source. We worked to provide information needed, whether it be orders from those seeking to secure PPE products, availability of PPE materials suppliers, those with open cut-and-sew capacity, information regarding PPE requirements and much more.

We received calls from everybody under the sun, from a retired schoolteacher with a sewing machine and a sister with the same thing who wanted to help, to large companies that also wanted to help but weren't sure how to navigate the waters. At the same time, we received calls from doctors' offices,

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hospitals, buyer groups, large corporations, all in need of PPE products in large quantities, with individual requests for as many as 12 million masks.

Those in need all wanted finished PPE products. They didn't want to have to piece together supply chains. We started acting as a conduit to put together effective domestic PPE product supply chains that never existed before by putting the hospitals and buyer groups in contact with fabric mills, and put the fabric mills in touch with cut-and-sew companies.

In the early stages of the crisis, SEAMS joined with the National Council of Textile Organizations (NCTO), the industrial Fabrics Association International (IFAI) and INDA, The Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry, to form an industry association coalition. This helped ensure that each sectors' members were receiving consistent messaging regarding the PPE shortage.

It also allowed us to connect members across the different industry sectors to build effective PPE supply chains that may have never done so prior. With NCTO's leadership, it allowed the associations to have a more collective voice when communicating with the White House PPE acquisition team, including DLA & FDA, for the procurement of PPE.

We also conducted a survey of members to determine its total cut-and-sew capacity and shared that information with the association coalition. That, combined with the survey conducted by NCTO that included the other associations, helped draw a more complete picture of capacity in the U.S.

Seeing a big need for patterns, SEAMS' created a PPE Pattern Resource Hub to centralize many patterns required to produce PPE products from home creations to approved medical products for easy access. The association also kept members apprised of available government programs, such as The Cares Act, to help keep the supply chain running.

SEAMS also implemented a PPE designation for both manufacturers of PPE and suppliers of PPE materials on its SEAMS Power Search tool to aid in production and distribution.

And, as importantly, as our members were rallying around the call for PPE, we saw another role being to communicate these efforts among membership and to the larger general populace. The purpose was threefold: 1) to tout the valiant steps our members were taking to address the PPE shortage; 2) to inform healthcare professionals, first responders and others in need of PPE that our members are available to help meet their needs; and 3) to raise awareness among lawmakers, policymakers and other officials about the importance of a readily available U.S. sewn products/textile/apparel value chain during a crisis and even during "normal" times.

To that end, aside from emails we were already sending on members' behalf about PPE supply and needs, SEAMS also issued nine internal emails featuring a total of 26 members that recounted their work in the PPE realm. These stories were shared on its social media channels to cast a wider awareness net.

With similar intentions, we initiated a very successful PPE social media marketing campaign, "Bring Back PPE Production," heralding the great work being conducted by the industry and especially

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SEAMS members in support of the PPE crisis. A number of highly searched hashtags such as #GetUsPPE #SafetyFirst #PPEshortage #MadeInAmericaPPE were included in these posts to maximize visibility and interest. Part of this initiative was the creation of an [e-book](#) showcasing many of its members providing PPE products.

Additionally, we communicated with the healthcare community, especially Nursing Associations, to shorten their path to securing PPE products.

Also from a communications standpoint, SEAMS, along with SPESA, co-sponsored an April webinar titled "[Supply Chain Dynamics Amid COVID-19.](#)"

And as a way of continuing to keep you informed and bring value, in August we initiated a SEAMS Mid-Week News Update focused on sharing relevant industry articles, announcements and press releases, with an emphasis on PPE.

Throughout the pandemic, SEAMS' continued to increase our presence on social media, with several posts per week on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). (Please follow, like and share posts on these channels to help spread SEAMS' messages.) In a little over a year's time (from Sept. 2019-Nov. 2020), the association saw its social media engagement grow exponentially:

- Facebook likes rose 75%, from 209 to 366, with an April post about member Contempora Fabrics' PPE efforts drawing the highest exposure by reaching more than 19,000 people and drawing 1,178 reactions, comments and shares;
- LinkedIn followers increased 226%, from 424 to 1,381, and impressions (the number of times a post was shown to LinkedIn members) peaking in April to 16,656;
- Twitter followers grew 192%, from 112 to 327, with the No. 1 tweet being a May 27 post that was part of SEAMS' Bring Back PPE Production series.
- Instagram followers now total 255 since the page was created in Sept. 2019.

All told, nearly 300 separate posts spread across all four platforms were created by SEAMS in the last 16 months.

Throughout the pandemic, SEAMS continued its "regular" endeavors to keep you informed through our bimonthly newsletter and member eblasts. Mainstays on the newsletter were lead stories highlighting members or their activities, a Technology Corner featuring links to pertinent articles, a Member Spotlight section and a new Millennial Corner blog featuring one of its younger members. (If you have a Millennial employee – around the ages of 24 and 39 – who you think would like to submit a blog, please let us know.)

SEAMS' members are allotted four dedicated eblasts highlighting any news about their company and, to date this year, we have sent 143 on our members' behalf.

Through all of these efforts – including SEAMS' work building the PPE supply chain bridge, communicating with members, sharing your stories and other forms of outreach – the association no doubt increased membership value and immensely raised our profile. And, as a side benefit, SEAMS expanded our roster by 76 members.

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As 2020 draws to a close, amidst all the craziness we have all endured this year, there is still much to be thankful for. I cannot thank SEAMS members, both old and new, enough for the way you stepped up to address the PPE crisis. I am so proud of our industry as a whole for the manner in which supply

chains that never existed were formed, many in days, to address this great need of supporting our frontline workers while at the same time keeping their employees safe.

But we cannot stop here. There is still much work to be done to reestablish a substantial and vibrant sewn products supply chain presence here in the U.S. It will require that you expend the same or more effort in 2021 to make this happen. And, I assure you that we at SEAMS will continue to do our part.

Have a safe and prosperous New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will Duncan", written in a cursive style.

Will Duncan
Executive Director,
SEAMS Association